

TS #142023

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28 January 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Recommendations Regarding the Continuation
of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee

1. In my last report to you (30 October 1959) I indicated that the 1959 net evaluation would not be presented to the President until the late spring and that the President had indicated that this was the last such report he desired during his term of office. About the same time General Twining wrote to you informing you of the President's wishes and advising you that plans for a 1960 evaluation had been cancelled.

2. Since I last reported, the Subcommittee Staff has completed its special target study and presented its findings orally to the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the service Secretaries. It has also completed its secret study and presented the results to General Twining. Both briefings are tentatively scheduled for presentation to the President in February. Neither of these is a Subcommittee project, and you have no direct responsibility for the contents.

3. The Staff is now completing its written report of the 1959 evaluation and preparing the oral briefing. Once this has been presented in April or May the Staff will have no studies on its docket.

4. In these circumstances it is appropriate to consider the desirability of continuing the Subcommittee and the Staff. There are three alternatives:

a. To continue the Subcommittee and the Staff indefinitely without any visible object except to keep the organization together and to educate the Staff for any future tasks set for it by the new administration. This seems to me to be an unnecessary waste of manpower.

b. To reduce the Staff to a minimal number, which would prepare whatever history might be useful and dispose of existing records and documents. (I believe this is what Gordon Gray proposed to General Twining and General Hickey some months ago; at that time the Staff was heavily occupied, and Mr. Gray withdrew his proposal after General Twining interposed objection.)

c. To cancel the NSC directive establishing the Subcommittee and the Staff, and to discontinue studies. A variation would be simply to abolish the Staff but to maintain the Subcommittee in being on an inactive basis. This last course is the one I recommend and one which would probably meet with some support in the Subcommittee.

5. When the net evaluation procedure was initiated in 1953, it was believed, quite rightly, that the outcome of a general war would be determined very largely by the outcome of the air battles over the US and the USSR. As a consequence, elaborate means were developed in the Subcommittee Staff for determining the outcome of these air battles, for determining the placement of weapons, and for estimating the effects upon the two countries. In recent years as newer weapons systems were developed or estimated for either side, these were incorporated, but the principal means of delivery in both cases has remained the bomber up through the 1959 evaluation (i. e., for the period through mid-1962). These studies have probably been as realistic as possible and generally accurate as to orders of magnitude.

6. We have now reached a stage in the development of weapons systems where many -- if not most -- of the old concepts will not be applicable in the period of 1963 and beyond. The bomber is rapidly phasing out of the Soviet inventory as the principal delivery weapon; its post-1962 role will probably be limited to such special missions as reconnaissance or attack upon targets with no fixed address. The same thing will be true of the United States. Both the US and USSR, realizing the importance of an invulnerable retaliatory capability, are moving from the vulnerable aircraft to the almost invulnerable missile either in a hard site or aboard a mobile launching vehicle.

7. Thus, the air battle will be no longer of decisive concern. The many and complicated factors which must go into a calculation of the outcome of these battles will still apply but only to peripheral aspects of a general war situation. The importance of surprise and timing will be greatly reduced. Either side will be able to launch a surprise attack of devastating proportions, but this will not have a decisive impact; the reply could be equally devastating. Khrushchev himself admitted this in his recent speech to the Supreme Soviet.

8. A general war calculation under the conditions of 1963 and beyond will be relatively simple -- compared with calculations applying to 1955-60. Until an effective anti-missile system is developed, the amount of physical damage will simply be a function of the number of missiles, the efficiency of the missiles, and the targets selected. When an effective anti-missile system is developed, then obviously a new situation will arise, and a different and wholly new set of calculations will be introduced. At that time a new war game procedure will probably be needed.

9. I believe that, in view of the foregoing, no useful purpose would be served by keeping the present Staff in being. It may be desirable to keep the Subcommittee itself in being, simply to maintain the principle of interdepartmental concern

with the problem and to maintain the basic machinery for instituting new studies should they be deemed necessary. However, I see no merit in initiating additional studies until there is a major change in the strategic situation, or in maintaining a standby Staff pending such changes.

10. I therefore recommend the following:

a. Steps be taken to terminate the NSC directive establishing the present staff mission and structure as of 30 June 1960, at the same time retaining the Subcommittee on a standby basis.

b. If such proves unsuccessful, to suggest to Mr. Gray that the Staff be reduced to a standby basis as soon as the 1959 evaluation has been completed.

c. In any case, to seek Mr. Gray's approval for withdrawal of the CIA member as regular staff member and his transfer to advisory status at an early date. Advisory status would insure whatever is required in regard to assuring an adequate and properly utilized intelligence input without tying up a senior CIA officer full time with activities of marginal value.

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